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The image shows the front cover of a book. The cover is a deep, dark red color. A large, ornate border is gold-tooled into the cover. This border consists of an outer rectangular frame with decorative corner and mid-point motifs. Inside this is a large, arched frame that follows the shape of the cover. The four corners of the inner frame are filled with a pattern of small, five-pointed stars. The word "PIGNADAR" is printed in a gold, serif, all-caps font in the center of the cover, within the arched frame.

PIGNADAR



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PIGNADAR :

OR

THREE DAYS' WANDERINGS

IN THE

LANDES.

BY

ALETHEA E.



LONDON :

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

1855.

203. d. 334.



TO

MY DEAR FATHER,


THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

WHEN I originally undertook to write the following little sketch of a most agreeable time, spent in the society of two dear and much loved relatives—while wandering through those tortuous paths which on all sides intersect that part of the country recognised by the name—“Pignadar”*— I was very far from imagining it would ever meet the

* The term used in the South of France, to designate a Pine Forest.



public eye. My surmises were, however, entirely wrong; for, owing to the kindness and ready goodnature of a valued friend, I was induced to allow this—my first attempt at description—to brave the unprejudiced criticism of the reading world. It is with the greatest diffidence and fear of rebuke—although, perhaps, well merited—that I see this earliest and humble effort of my pen go forth from the printer's hands.

Having once yielded to the pressing solicitations of *her*, who has so kindly insisted on my acquiescence, I would not afterwards *draw back*; and now await, with patient anxiety, the judgment that shall be passed upon me.

Nevertheless, I can safely assure any

one into whose hands this book may chance to fall, that every incident therein recorded is most strictly true; nor on any occasion—whether relating to the country or the habits of its people—have I allowed myself the least exaggeration; and truly would my heart rejoice, were I to prove instrumental in bringing into general notice a portion of the French empire, which is at present so rarely visited.

Having endeavoured to excite on my behalf the best sympathies of an enlightened and indulgent public, I will merely remark that, should even the smallest part of this simple narrative obtain the approval of those who may take the trouble of perusing it, I shall

feel abundantly rewarded ; while I certainly expect, and duly acknowledge, the justice of censure upon its many defects of style and composition.

And now, dear readers, I finally bid you farewell. Permit me to add that upon your impartial verdict depends my ever again attempting thus to tax your kind forbearance ; and I shall henceforth contentedly retire within the quiet seclusion of private life, which—from, I trust, pardonable vanity—I was induced for a moment to abandon.

A. E.

Bayonne, January, 1855.

PIGNADAR.

BAYONNE, October 11th, 1854.

MY DEAR CATHERINE,

I promised, in my letter of the 21st ultimo, to send you the narrative of a journey made a short time since in the "Landes." On reading it over again, I really feel quite ashamed of my performance; but encouraged by the kind way in which you express yourself towards me with respect to my powers of description, I venture to give it you; simply requesting that, should the length

of my story frighten you at the outset, you will put the whole *document* into the fire.

And now, without further delay, I plunge boldly into my subject, throwing myself on your mercy, and hoping to be judged leniently.

Towards the latter end of January, 1854—the sky dark and lowering—some men, employed along the coast of the Bay of Biscay—towards that part known familiarly as the “Bight of the Bay”—observed, through the driving sleet and rain, a vessel in distress. The sea was running mountains high at the time, and all hope of succour appeared fruitless. In breathless anxiety, those on shore watched her struggling in the waves; and as night drew on, and mast

after mast vanished as they were cut away, there seemed no prospect of anything save certain destruction to both vessel and crew—if, instead of moderating, the weather should, on the contrary, become worse—and the gallant ship, with her no less gallant sailors, must be wrecked upon the inhospitable and dangerous coast.

At sunrise, what a scene presented itself! The ship was lying a shapeless mass, embedded in the sand; with every wave making a clear breach over her, and her cargo strewed along the shore; while, a little further from the sea, might be observed a rude tent, hastily constructed of a few sails—rescued hurriedly, and with considerable risk from the lost vessel—which served as a place

of shelter to that handful of men who, some hours before, had bravely endeavoured to make their ship—which, it may not be amiss to inform you, bore with becoming pride the “Union Jack”—*weather the storm.*

There being no hope of saving any part of the wreck at that season of the year, and on such a fearful coast; all idea of doing so was given up until a more favourable moment should arrive.

In the south of France, the climate—as you are aware—is very mild; and despite those terrible storms which tradition, not unjustly, attributes to the dreaded waters of the Bay of Biscay, spring rapidly advances; and, in the splendour of a brilliant sunshine and unclouded sky, the beholder soon forgets

the direful accidents so often witnessed by that treacherous ocean, now lying calm and unruffled at his feet — the object of his unbounded admiration, and at the same time, wonder and awe!

In order not to digress too widely, I must state that the country, extending from the frontiers of Spain—the land of chivalry and romance—to that city of wealth and commerce, Bordeaux (from what I have already written, you will remember my narrative is laid within that portion of the French empire), altogether consists of immense pine forests, between which and the sea coast are innumerable lofty sandhills. These pine forests constitute the riches of this vast territory; affording ample matter for large commercial transactions

in turpentine ; and also supplying that greatest of luxuries, abundance of fuel, to those who—but little gifted by Fortune—are not in a position to avail themselves of all *the goods the Gods provide*.

It would, however, be erroneous to imagine that these forests are composed entirely of pines — far otherwise ; the beautiful cork-tree flourishes among them in extraordinary profusion, and proves almost an equal source of revenue : besides, its dark foliage contrasts most magnificently with the enormous bushes, or rather trees, of hawthorn and yellow broom, which grow here to a prodigious size.

Accordingly, with a bright sunshine, and at the beginning of the “ merry month of May ”—when “ first the soul of

Love is sent abroad"—a party of three people might be seen wending their way, along the numerous and intricate paths that on all sides intersect those romantic forests. I would fain picture to your mind's eye a just idea of this little group, which consisted of two ladies and one gentleman, each mounted on a small pony — of a race peculiar to the "Landes." The appearance of these quadrupeds was not such as to excite any alarm for the security of life or limb, even supposing their riders were by nature addicted to fear; but, on the contrary, their chief apprehension arose from the fact, that the place appointed for their first night's halt—about five hours distant—would scarcely be reached before dark; and notwithstanding the

quiet disposition of the inhabitants, it would have been most imprudent in unprotected strangers to allow the shades of evening to fall upon them in this wild district—surrounded by “*charbonniers*” and, very probably, wolves !

The *trio* in question being severally equipped with what was requisite—not for the *decoration*—vanities of the toilet are unknown in the “Landes”—but for the *cleanliness* of their persons—our little cavalcade *got fairly under weigh*—guided by the only one of the party who had ever ridden through those forests before.

The gentleman—for he it is to whom I allude—had apparently arrived at that time of life designated as something beyond middle age ; his grey hair and slightly wrinkled brow bearing testimony

that a certain number of years must have passed over his head; although both in figure and activity he might—undoubtedly would — put many to shame, whose age by no means equals his own.

Having so lately drawn your attention to the horses, it may be well to inform you that the animal which this venerable personage bestrode was one of the smallest of his species; and certainly bore a striking contrast to the noble chargers that in days of yore had proudly borne him whom I am attempting to describe, and whose every look and gesture denoted that his early career had been spent in the military service of his country.

Immediately following him, rode a lady, whose appearance — despite the

saying that “ladies have no age”—betokened having left the nursery. *Malgré pourtant* those infantine scenes had long ceased to be familiar to her, she was still in the enjoyment of youth, and—notwithstanding that *some* of the graces, lavished upon a favoured few, were but sparingly dealt out in this instance—their absence was most fully atoned for by the adornments of mind and perfection of character, of which the lady under discussion was the lucky possessor: it may truly be said that her whole life was occupied in earnest endeavour to please others.

Having thus described two of the individuals connected with this history, we will now turn to the third; who, although making part of the *cortège*, did not by

any means appear so bent upon the business share of the expedition as her companions—judging, at least, from the air of *nonchalance* with which she had regarded the numerous preparations for their journey.

Our present heroine bore about her all the signs of a *so far* smooth and prosperous existence. It is true there was from time to time visible on her countenance a slight degree of thoughtfulness and anxiety—from which the happiest mortals are not exempt; but these fits of melancholy were very transient, and speedily dispelled by shouts of hearty laughter. The natural disposition of this fair lady, always leading her to view everything on its brightest side, was—with great injustice—the occasional cause

of extreme levity being attributed to certain acts, which in themselves were perfectly harmless.

As I before stated, the village where our travellers intended to remain the first night was distant a full five hours' ride, through a country which required all the aid of daylight to speed them on their way; but, *par bonheur*, whatever might be the outwardly unprepossessing appearance of the three horses, the sun was yet high in the heavens when our little party stopped at the door of the village inn — which, in opposition to most others of equal stamp—especially in the “Landes”—exhibited manifest tokens of comfort, and even far greater civilization than might be expected in the depths of a pine forest. Had it,

however, been much less inviting, the fatigue consequent upon so long a journey would have caused our travellers to hail, with unbounded pleasure, the prospect of complete repose which the nice looking beds and *dazzlingly* clean linen—always *sans reproche* in France—thus temptingly offered them.


The laws of nature having so ordained that human creatures are incapable of life without proper stimulants, the “sweet restorer, balmy sleep,” was not courted by any of our party until the *inner man* had taken his share of an excellent supper provided by the kind hostess—not of the “Black Boy and Stomach-ache”—for in this land of refinement such *euphonious* signs are unknown. Here, the sole external evidence that

“ Man and Beast may enter in, and find food and shelter,” was a branch of shrivelled fir tree, hanging lazily from a crooked stick ; while, upon different parts of the house, were painted assurances that both biped and quadruped would be treated “ *au plus juste prise :*” and as these promises are frequently not by any means fulfilled, an immense *Croix de Saint Jean* figured in a conspicuous place, in hopes of averting the wrath of Heaven from this wilful and flagrant disregard of truth.

Their frugal repast ended, our travellers gladly retired to their respective couches ; and, after enjoying some hours’ refreshing sleep, they arose betimes, breakfasted, and again proceeded on their way.

And now, I must observe, the scene changed.

The principal motive that attracted hitherwards these hardy adventurers—for such they might truly be called—compelled them to abandon the forests, and betake themselves to the sea shore. A ride of more than an hour brought them to an opening between the trees, which at once afforded them a sight of that coast—an object of dread to many a brave yet sinking heart—now welcomed with intense delight; for noble indeed was the prospect beheld by their admiring eyes! There they stood, a mere speck in that wild and trackless region, with nothing visible behind them but miles and miles of sandhills; while in front stretched a wide expanse of fierce



and tempestuous ocean—whose mighty power no human skill or energy has ever been able to subdue.

Time wore on apace, and consequently it behove our *trio* to advance likewise; for here, as in the forest, woe betide the unlucky wight, doomed to remain from sunset till daybreak *al fresco*, with the sky for a canopy, and the bare sand for his couch!—and many a weary mile had yet to be traversed ere our friendly hostess of the “Withered Bush” could again feel cheered by the presence of her guests of the previous evening.

The next line of march was — as already stated—by the sea shore. Our party halted here and there as they rode along, whenever the particular object of their journey obliged them to examine,

with critical and interested gaze, the various pieces of timber and remains of wreck, which the remorseless elements had thrown upon this coast in their terrible fury.

Several hours having fled rapidly by, it was only prudent not to allow the day to decline so far as would render all chance of returning to their night's quarter—before that glorious orb, the sun, had finally dipped beneath the foaming waves—utterly hopeless.

Having satisfactorily accomplished their task, no time was lost in endeavouring to regain the comfortable shelter of the village inn.

To return along the same route which they had taken in the morning, would—in most people's opinion—have been the

simplest, and perhaps the *wisest* course to pursue; but our enterprising friends were no cowardly calculators, their striking characteristic being an unconquerable and spirited thirst of adventure.

Despite, therefore, of repeated assertions that in many places the sand presented an exceedingly precarious footing for either man or beast, the dauntless little cavalcade at once banished every rising doubt or fear, and plunged boldly into the pathless maze of sandhills.

On they went, mile after mile, guided only by the sun; no human habitation was to be seen—nothing but sand and sky—hills beyond hills bounding their view on all sides. But these brave hearts knew no foolish despondings, and their perseverance was ultimately re-

warded by the glimpse of a distant pine forest. Thus encouraged, fresh stimulus was added to both the steeds and their riders—till at last its borders were safely gained; and truly, the pleasant shadow of the trees was most acceptable, after such a long exposure to the sunlight and glaring yellow sand. Even here, the party were quite in doubt as to the real locality—houses being “few and far between.”

Trusting, however, that Providence would lead their steps in the right course, and finally bring their wanderings to a successful termination, they still rode steadily on—although truth obliges me to confess that *now* some very slight misgivings occasionally arose, to disturb that total peace of mind which

would otherwise have been felt in this complete seclusion, so far removed from the busy haunts of man ; when, on a turning in the road, a village—or rather, an assemblage of somewhat dismantled dwellings — suddenly appeared before them. The aspect of this *so called* village was extremely humble, and yet it nevertheless boasted a “Place,”—standing in the centre of which, quietly stood, as if ready for a journey, a rather good specimen of that noble and useful creature, the horse.


In reply to various questions regarding the particular road that our travellers were destined to follow, a figure—which no one could at first sight suppose belonged to the gentler sex — came out of a cottage ; and,

having indulged itself in a sufficiently lengthened gaze, and becoming satisfied that the intruders were perfectly harmless; intimated that the before named animal—hitherto peacefully cropping the green grass—was doomed to carry this uncouth *female*!—for a woman's form it was, at least, guessed to be; but might, with nearly equal probability, have appertained to a class, universally arrogating to themselves the title of "Lords of the Creation." Also, her route, lying for a certain distance in the same track as that of the three travellers, she would willingly escort them—and by thus conducting our *trio* so far on the way, there could be no danger of their straying from the right path. This piece of condescension was

accepted with great gratitude; whereupon, the *fair Hebe* at once withdrew; but speedily reappeared, bearing in her arms an *immense* saddle—the precise date of which it would be difficult to ascertain—and accompanying its transmission from her own *delicate* hands to the back of her poor horse with a well applied kick, she skilfully adjusted the girths. This *operation* over, the next thing to be done was to envelop her interesting person in a very large cloak—which, as we shall presently see, did not in all respects faithfully perform its duty; but more of this in proper time and place.

The necessary arrangements being duly made, and everything seemingly prepared for a start, the ideas naturally

enough suggested themselves — how is the lady going to ride?—or, in what position will her manifold graces be displayed to her admiring companions? These conjectures were quickly solved; as no dragoon in Her Majesty's service would more coolly have put his foot in the stirrup, and sprung from thence into the saddle, than did this sturdy dame! *Then* it was that our travellers were enabled to judge of the perfidious nature of the cloak; for no sooner had this fair one mounted her steed, than two most disorderly lookings legs were exhibited! I do not, however, mean to imply that attempts to hide their nakedness had been entirely forgotten: false indeed must be the narrator who would dare to insinuate so unjust a libel! or permit



this story to go forth with any sinister imputation on our heroine's modesty. No; truth positively denies the unpardonable calumny, since each supporter was furnished with its customary garment; but truth is likewise bound to confess that—independently of one of the articles in question being *white*, and the other *blue*—neither of them appeared to deem it requisite that the whole limb should be covered, and were evidently determined *to make a stand*—winding themselves, with dogged resolution, in rope style round the ankles!

This trifling insight into forest life has, I fear, led me to make a long digression. If it really *is* so, I humbly beg pardon, and without further delay will resume “the thread of my discourse.”


Happy was it for our three friends—I may doubtless presume to call them such—that the *rencontre* I have described actually took place; had it been otherwise, there is no knowing what disasters might not have occurred, and of a nature to excite alarm within the bravest minds !

On leaving this secluded hamlet—the peaceful abode of their conductress—the little party found that their road lay across a barren moor; without a tree—or even a post—to mark, in the slightest degree, the course they ought to follow. They *jogged on* for a considerable time in safety; but with frequent apprehension of serious accident, owing to the exceedingly marshy nature of the ground — and the horses being of

anything but *Herculean* proportions. These noble steeds were, moreover, sadly addicted to stopping short at every critical juncture, thereby continually threatening to capsize their riders into the most unattractive looking swamps of black mud !


At length they reached another small hamlet, where two or three roads, going in contrary directions, warned the *lovely cicerone* that—*bon gré, mal gré*—she must bid farewell to her *compagnons de voyage*.

Notwithstanding repeated assurances that the route from thence to the place of destination was so perfectly straight that it would be almost impossible to miss the beaten track, our travellers found their guide's information decidedly incorrect.



Trusting, however, to the old proverb—
“*Tous chemins mènent à Rome*”—they
threw their bridles on their horses’ necks,
and stoically abandoned themselves to
their fate.

At this trying moment, it was perhaps
rather unfortunate for our adventurers
that they were not trained from child-
hood in the doctrines of papacy; because,
in that case, any fears that *might*—
probably *did*—arise in their minds,
would instantly have been dispelled by
the reflection that, although surrounded
on all sides by a most uncheering pros-
pect—nothing visible for several miles
but apparently interminable pine forests—
they remained still under the protection
of “*La Vierge*.” Unable, alas! to “lay
this flattering unction to their souls,”



they rode onward, until, arriving at a spot where four roads met, they were compelled to halt—quite dismayed by this very unexpected dilemma—and with fluent tongue and eager glance proceeded to canvass the *pros and cons* of the peculiarly trying emergency in which they now found themselves.

A general view of the case being promptly discussed, it was unanimously agreed, that retrogression was—*d' abord*, a forced measure—and secondly, a prudent one.

Accordingly, retracing some part of the road by which they came, the two ladies stopped at a small clearing in the forest, for the purpose of refreshing their steeds; while the *cavalier* pushed forward to a place not far distant, where a wood-



man had been observed, busy at his accustomed labour.

In search of the necessary information, and while pursuing a rather difficult and tortuous path, our hero had nearly fallen a victim to the less reputable portion of the inhabitants of that wild district—and who form the sole impediment to travelling in perfect security through localities so little known to the world in general.

In reply to a civil “*bon jour*” from the horseman, a most unceremonious salutation was returned; the woodcutter at the same time advancing with a very suspicious look, and wielding in a menacing manner a tremendously thick club.

This impertinent piece of pleasantry, which might soon have become most alarming, was forthwith accompanied by




an enquiry as to whether the traveller was alone ! Our “gallant son of Mars”—for it was he, in truth, as my readers will already have guessed, who forms the subject of the present episode—was, however, nothing daunted ; and on hearing the ominous question put to him by this Knight of the Charcoal—“Are you travelling singly ?”—boldly replied that, so far from being a solitary wanderer, his force mustered several ! Judging, nevertheless, in conformity with that true old adage—“Prudence is the better part of Valour”—and that the wisest plan was to make his escape without needless delay—he rode rapidly onwards, until he arrived where the woodman, before mentioned, industriously pursued his calling.



The offer of a very small recompense—for the wants of these unsophisticated people are but trifling—easily induced this long sought individual to relinquish his work, and comply with the wishes of his interrogator; and fortunate was it for our *trio* that Providence had thus favoured them, by throwing an honest labourer in their way; certes, had it been otherwise ordained, they might indubitably have reckoned upon finding nothing softer than the cold ground for a bed, and the sky for a covering.

After numerous twistings and turnings, the guide conducted our travellers in safety to the outskirts of the forest.

By this means happily delivered from what was anything but an agreeable position, renewed energy was shown




both by the horses and their riders ; and although any attempts to force the poor animals into a canter would have been quite in vain, yet the rapidity with which they walked soon brought the rather fatigued party in sight of that desired haven—the village of the previous day.

Anxious to deviate from the general routine observed by many *writers of note* !!!—who seemingly consider it a point of honour that every detail—be it of great, or of small importance—should be duly laid before the public ; I shall spare my readers an enumeration of the different viands which composed the evening meal—merely remarking that they were of the humblest kind ; but at the same time more relished than many another repast, boasting luxurious dainties of “ fish,

flesh, and flowl ;” for the principal actors in the scene had their appetites sharpened by sea air, and an eleven hour’s ride—according to the recital I have here given.

Apprehensive though one naturally feels, when once fairly embarked in the formidable undertaking of committing to paper all the *haps and mishaps* of a tour through a pineforest, that certain unavoidable repetitions — which most probably occur in the course of the narrative—will, instead of amusing, somewhat try the patience of those persons into whose hands the account may fall ; yet, having led my readers so far on the way, I can scarcely permit them to lose sight just at present of our three travellers, in the welfare of whom, I



dare to hope, a slight degree of interest has been excited.

Nature being amply refreshed by several hours sleep ; those comfortable beds, so eagerly sought the night before, were not vacated the following morning until the risen sun was tolerably high in the heavens—the journey appointed for that day being comparatively a very short one.

There is a well known saying :—

“ The darkest day, live till to-morrow, will have passed away.”

And so it must ever be when *pleasure* alone has for a brief space reigned paramount!—for at the end of three days, spent most enjoyably, our friends were compelled to think of returning homewards. Therefore, having, paid all due regard to *creature*

comforts, the steeds were once more saddled and bridled, and their heads turned in the direction of that prettiest of all towns, Bayonne — distant about fifty *kilomètres* — which for several years had been the residence of the little party, whose spirited adventures in the “Landes” I have feebly endeavoured to describe.

Thus concludes my narration ; and now that I have finally brought it to a close, I am almost seized with a desire not to send it ; lest, to the more practised minds of some of my readers, it may appear insipid and badly expressed. But since I alluded to the subject in my last letter, you might possibly think that idleness was the true cause of my silence, and I wish to prove that such is not really the

case. Mary begs me to add the names of our three “illustrious travellers;” and I grant her request by informing you that the gallant *cavalier* was my father, F. G.—*Représentant de Sa Majesté Britannique*; and the two ladies who accompanied him were—M. E., and myself.

Affectionately yours,

ALETHEA E.

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